Christ Church Elbow Park Archives

# Interview with Marion Rogers

# Christ Church Elbow Park Oral History Project 2020

Interviewer: Catherine Evamy

17 December 2020

2 PM

Zoom Interview

# Transcript of Marion Rogers

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Interviewed by Catherine Evamy

Catherine Evamy, Interviewer

Marion Rogers, Narrator

**Catherine Evamy**: My name is Catherine Evamy and the date today is the seventeenth of December 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I am distance interviewing Christ Church parishioner, Marion Rogers. This interview is being recorded for Christ Church archives, and will be made available to researchers. You will be given a transcript of the recording and you will have the opportunity to review it and reconsider any portions of the interview at that time. Is that okay with you?

**Marion Rogers:** Yes.

**Catherine:** For the record I will point out that Marion and I have agreed ahead of this oral interview that Marion would write down her thoughts in answer to five or six of my prepared questions and Marion will read her responses for the record. Marion, please tell us something about yourself and your early life.

**Marion:** I am Marion Amy Rogers. I was born in Montreal, Quebec, on May 15, 1937. I grew up in a modest, traditional Anglican home. My British mother had a very solid faith and I never questioned that I would do anything else, but follow her footsteps. Sunday School (and then later in my life teaching Sunday School) and volunteer work in the church was always part of my life. My church homes over the 83 years of my life have been: St. Barnabas Anglican Church in St. Lambert, Quebec; St. Thomas Anglican Church, in Belleville, Ontario; St. Peters Anglican Church in the Town of Mount Royal, Quebec; St. James Anglican Church, Rosemere, Quebec; St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, in London, Ontario — where we became lifelong close friends with The Most Reverend Archbishop Terrence (Terry) and Alice Jean (AJ) Finlay; Christ Church (Elbow Park) in Calgary; St. Michael's Anglican Church in Canmore, Alberta; and Windermere Valley Shared Ministry in Invermere, B.C.

My husband, J. Victor (Vic) Rogers died in 2006.

Our family has had a residence in Canmore for more than 40 years, and St. Michael's Anglican Church has been an important part of my life in the mountains. I volunteer there (taking on projects such as their photo directory and coordinating and implementing the celebrations for their 125th Anniversary - that was a 2-year project).

In addition, and since the Covid-19 isolation, I have also joined my daughter's church in Invermere, B.C. (Windermere Valley Shared Ministry), so that I can worship and sing with her, on-line via Zoom, every Sunday, which has been meeting my very deep needs to have some family in my current spiritual life and journey.

**Catherine:** When did you start attending Christ Church?

**Marion:** Our family came to Christ Church when we moved to Calgary in 1976, after 'church shopping' as a family. We unanimously chose Christ Church (Elbow Park) primarily because of the music and it just 'felt right'. We had all been involved in various capacities and activities at our London, Ontario church, and we were seeking a similar experience in Calgary.

Our three teenaged children (at that time), Carolyn, Jim and Sheryl, were busy getting to know new friends and schools and Vic was very busy establishing his new business career. I struck a strong connection with the Christ Church rector at that time, David Tatchell, and together we set off on a project to 'get to know every member of the congregation better'. We did! This 'getting to know you' project involved the broader parish and Christ Church neighbours.

**Catherine:** What activities at Christ Church did you become involved with?

**Marion:** Music has always been a strong passion of mine, so we were delighted to be part of the Christ Church team to invite our esteemed friend, renowned organist and Dean of the University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Music — Hugh McLean — to play the first recital at Christ Church on the new Gabriel Kney Organ on November 13, 1978.

We convened a series of concerts in the following months, highlighted by a concert by the internationally renowned group, The Canadian Brass, who played our feature concert on March 22, 1979. All five members of The Canadian Brass were personal friends of Vic and I, and it was an extraordinary gift to Christ Church that they agreed to play for us. I will donate some original photos from this historic occasion to the archives.

Other concerts in the celebratory series were The Early Music Singers and the Courante Woodwind Group from the University of Calgary on December 8, 1978; The Calgary Chamber Singers and the El Kadoba String Quartet on February 9, 1979; and, the Christ Church Choir on May 11, 1979 with John Searchfield, our organist and choir director.

On March 22, 1989, we organized a benefit concert featuring Jane Coop on the piano and Paula O'Driscoll, mezzo-soprano, to raise funds for the purchase of a grand piano.

During our centennial year of 2013, we hosted a piano concert by Calgary artist Jan Lisiecki, who was only 18-years-old at that time, but already an international pianist; a choral concert featuring The Vancouver Cathedral Choir; and, a performance by the Cowtown Opera Company. A CD was made entitled "The Year of Music at Christ Church".

I have treasured all of the broad range of music and musical programs that have always existed at Christ Church — may they last forever. They bring a wide range of people to Christ Church from all over the city.

**Catherine:** Would you say a few words about the many other things you were involved with at Christ Church?

**Marion:** Some of the other projects and/or volunteer services I have taken on at Christ Church have been:

In 2010 and going forward, I so enjoy assisting with The Blessing of the Animals service. I think it's wonderful and we bring in the neighbourhood for that and it is lovely.

In 2012, I was elected to serve as a delegate to Synod to represent Christ Church for a 2-year term.

Also in 2012, Lucile Edwards and I became Co-Chairs of the Memorabilia Committee for the planning of the 2013 100th Anniversary Centennial Celebrations. Unfortunately, Lucile moved away, but I continued as the Chair and also served on the Christ Church Centennial Celebrations Steering Committee for the next two years. The Memorabilia Team brainstormed for ideas, then sourced manufacturers of the products we had chosen. They included boxed and dated Centennial Christmas ornaments; canvas carry tote bags with our Centennial Logo; the production of a new Centennial Parish Photo Directory; searching for, and then commissioning, an artist to paint the recently renovated Christ Church building and the new Memorial Garden. It was a delight to work with our chosen artist, Grant Reddick. The original painting was framed and auctioned off at a Gala Centennial Party, with Frank King being our celebrity auctioneer. The painting was subsequently donated back to Christ Church for future generations to enjoy. Various sized reproductions of the painting were produced and sold for further profits. We were very proud of doing all of this without any debt. We were determined we would not have any debt from the committee. We organized and manned a display and sales table in the Parish Hall for several weeks.

As 2013 was the year of Calgary's disastrous flood, and many parishioners and neighbours lost all of their Christmas decorations, we donated our Centennial Christmas ornaments to any families who wished to have one.

For many years I enjoyed serving as a Sidesperson.

Now in 2020, I am currently a member of the Christ Church Telephone Phoning Tree.

**Catherine:** Which of these many activities gave you the most satisfaction?

**Marion:** I am a "Project Person". I feel fulfilled when I take on a project and see it through to completion. Whatever my current project is seems to becomes my favourite. This gives me a feeling of fulfillment. I always need to feel that I am doing God's work, while I am giving my all to whatever project I am undertaking. I am usually very tired at the end of a completed project but it's a "Good Tired". I often think of my mother and hope that she would be proud of whatever I have been able to do with the gifts I have been given over my lifetime.

**Catherine:** Marion, that is very precious that you said that. I'm quite sure your mother would be. How could she not be so proud of you? You have overcome, as we know, so many obstacles, and your parents, your friends, the people who watch you, are just amazed at your energy and your dedication to whatever you are doing.

I don't want to press you, but now is your opportunity to make any other comments that you might like to if you wish. You will have seen lots of changes over time, new people, new rectors. Does anything spring to mind that you think is really outstanding?

**Marion**: On a personal note, I would have to say that I feel very blessed to call Christ Church my Calgary Church Home. I feel blessed to have come to know so many of the rectors in all these years I have been involved. We have had some outstanding leadership at Christ Church over the years, beginning with David Tatchell and, of course, now with David Pickett, and all of those in between. Each one had their own special focus of strength. Of course, we have to think of Herb O'Driscoll and Barry Curtis, and so many more. It's like a patchwork quilt that has all come together over all of these years. Each one of them leaving their special stamp, expertise and caring on Christ Church, and bringing in the flock of Christ Church people. Thinking back on it, it is quite amazing how it has all come together, all these years.

**Catherine:** When I think about all the churches that you mentioned right at the beginning of this session, and the places you've lived in, you have known a lot of clergy and a lot of congregations, what would you say is the thread that runs through these Anglican congregations that you have been a part of?

**Marion:** It would be deep, passionate and warm caring for their congregations. I would say that whoever the search committee people were all those years ago, they were seeking similar qualities in their rectors.

Before our family came to Calgary, we'd had such an enriching decade at St. John the Evangelist Church in London. All of us were deeply involved there. That was our life. We wanted to bring that to Calgary. Now it was a different chapter, but I think the qualities we were looking for when

we went 'church shopping' were the same. The churches we have chosen to be part of have a quality of caring, and always good music.

**Catherine:** Would you like to say a little bit about your daughter, Carolyn, and the church she is at in B.C. and what she does there?

**Marion:** I would be delighted. She has a Music degree and a Masters of Divinity degree. She combines these areas of love and expertise in her ministerial leadership at Windermere Valley Shared Ministry, which is a combined Anglican/United Church. Carolyn and her husband, Greg, do all of the music at this church.

Living as we are through a worldwide pandemic, we are worshipping online now — not sitting in a pew. We worship via Zoom, like we are doing now, and it's a wonderful way for Carolyn to share her wide range of expertise in ministry at her church. Just as David Pickett said last night, "We had a better turnout of Christ Church parishioners for the Happy Hour, than we've ever had for the Sunday morning meetings." He said, "It's better. We're going to do more of this," because it brought the people in. That's what Carolyn's musical gifts do for her church in Invermere and far beyond. When I'm craving family, I get to worship, not only with my daughter in another province, but sometimes with our grandson from Kelowna, and sometimes my son and family come from Colorado. Carolyn is reaching these people via Zoom and I can worship with them online.

There is something happening within the world of our churches. Everything has changed as a result of Covid-19 and our isolation and our restrictions. I do believe that David Pickett and Brandon [Witwer] will and are picking up on this and the importance of accepting the change that we are experiencing. I think it is awesome.

**Catherine:** Do you sing along in your kitchen? —

**Marion:** [laughter] Yes, I do! I sing heartily. Others do too, you can see on Zoom. It is a wonderful way to worship and sing safely together.

**Catherine:** Do you have anything else you would like to share?

**Marion:** Yes — two things: first that my friends and family are the light in my life and second that I think it is marvellous that you and the whole archivist team are doing these interviews and recording pockets of importance in the life of worship at Christ Church. I appreciate how much time you must be putting in to this project. Thank you.

**Catherine:** It's very interesting and marvellous to capture all the stories of early Calgary, of the people who have come to Calgary, so much colour and humour ,and sometimes mischievous things. It's a great experience. I thank you very much on behalf of the committee for taking the time to prepare for this.

**Marion:** I was thinking of one more thing: the extraordinary service that Christ Church did for the broader community during the flood in 2013. They opened their doors to everyone for showers, food, warmth, and to allow people to plug in their electronics because they had no power for days and days on end. There is no doubt that camaraderie developed. It is a little bit like what we are living through with Covid-19, now in this pandemic: it's lonely, it's dark, it's very hard to keep your spirits up. But that warmth, comfort and hospitality that is being extended to so many through Christ Church is priceless. Clearly God is working through David and Brandon and Mac and Bob to work this critically important ministry.

**Catherine:** Well, thank you for bringing that up, because that is a lovely way to end our session. Thank you.

**Marion:** My pleasure, I'm pleased to do my small part.